Retro #17: Swimming in the Bay

Photos from the St. Stanislaus school catalogs of 1942 and 1924 show students enjoying a swim in St. Louis Bay in front of the school. That of 1942 provides an excellent description of the experience.

1942 St. Stanislaus School Catalog

A refreshing swim after school hours.

Nature has endowed Saint Stanislaus with a natural natatorium that is unsurpassed—the Gulf of Mexico. During the warm season, the students swim in its invigorating waters from the thousand-foot Pier. From the shore line to the usual swimming area, the bottom is smooth, sandy and even, and is kept this way by the natural washing of the waves. The boys swim from the end of the Pier, in water that is between three and five feet deep.

No risk is taken when the students go in swimming. They enter and remain in the water in a group, and are not allowed to swim away from a certain area. At all times during swimming, there are two or more Brothers in constant supervision.

1924 St. Stanislaus School Catalog

The photo from the 1924 catalog shows what swim suits of 100 years ago looked like. The students obviously enjoyed swimming in the bay. Before the swimming pool at St. Stanislaus was constructed following Hurricane Camille in 1969, SSC students looked forward to a daily swim in the bay when weather permitted. In fact, articles in the *Sea Coast Echo* as early as May 1898 mentioned how anxious students were for the bay to warm up so that they could take a daily swim.

Sea Coast Echo article May 14, 1898

The summer regulations for the college were inaugurated last week. The arrangement allows the boys the privilege of the cool evening in which to take daily rambles or sport in the waters of the Bay. As yet the cool weather has prevented bathing, but as soon as the weather grows warm enough to take the chill out of the water the students will have the benefit of the exhilarating exercise. Already they are sighing for a swim, but the elements are against them. Under the present system they do all their preparatory work in the evening and enjoy the twilight hours in "idle fancie and airy noth-

The *Sea Coast Echo* in 1902 noted that the school administration took care to provide a first-class pier with bathing facilities for the students. An article from 1903 highlights how much the students looked forward to the warmer weather of May so that they could enjoy what the writer referred to as *"their first dip of the season in the briny waters of the bay."*

Sea Coast Echo April 19, 1902

Extensive improvements are being completed on the college front and wharf, preparatory to the opening of the bathing season. A new breakwater is being finish, the wharf has been thoroughly renovated, and the bathhouses have been put in first-class condition. The college enjoys exceptional advantages for bathing, and the "daily dip in the briny deep" is one of the most appreciated pleasures of the students.

Sea Coast Echo article May 23, 1903

Wednesday, the 20th, just as class was dismissed, the Prefect's shrill whistle was heard. What a yell came from over a hundred lusty throats! They did not ask the reason why, but they made a dash for the linen room to get their bathing paraphernalia, and marched down to the bath house as happy and contented as young mortals could be, for they were going to take their first dip of the season in the briny waters of the bay.

Br. Xavier Werneth, SSC Archivist, May 2025